

# *The* **Dental Assistant**

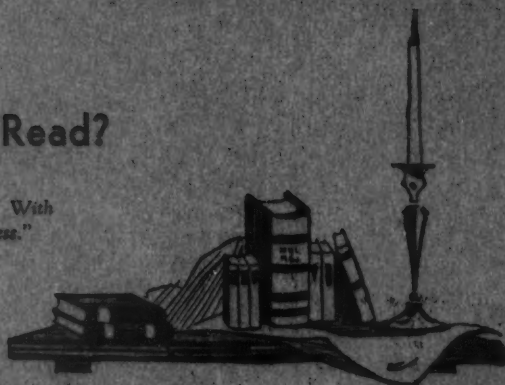
A Monthly Publication

NOVEMBER, 1932

VOLUME I, NUMBER 11

# What Do You Read?

"Tis knowledge we seek. With  
knowledge comes success."



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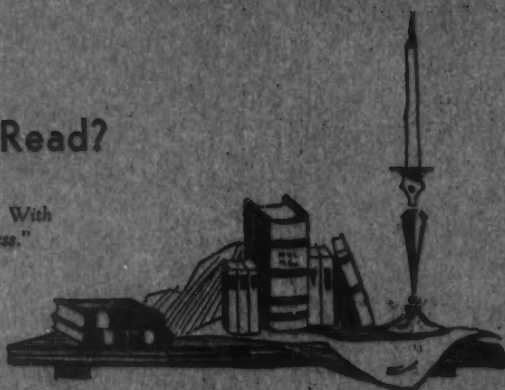
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"Acute Infections Originating in and About the Mouth"	Page 1768
"Editorial Department"	Page 1832-41
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"Dental Assisting in an Office of a Dental Pediatrician"	Page 1855
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<b>The Dental Digest</b>	<b>September</b>
"Dental Assistants and Secretaries"	Page 338

T. Natassia Larned.



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Official organ of the Educational and Efficiency Society for Dental Assistants,  
First District, N. Y., Inc.

JULIETTE A. SOUTHARD, *Managing Editor*

GERTRUDE GEHM, *Subscription Chm.*

ROSEMARIE CORNELIS, *Chm. Publication Com.*

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## The Value of the Dental Assistant

By RALPH R. BYRNES, D.D.S., F.A.C.D., Atlanta, Ga.

*Dean of The Atlanta-Southern Dental College*

**I**T is fitting that in the discussion of the specialized work of women in the field of dentistry, one should begin at the beginning. If we acquaint ourselves with the history and the visions of the founders of an enterprise, we may judge at the present time the extent of progress made and the direction it is taking. In tracing the development of women's services I shall at first draw no sharp line of distinction between the dental hygienist and the dental assistant. Both the dental assistant and the dental hygienist are now indispensable to the profession of dentistry, and a discussion of the work of either should prove of mutual interest.

The work of women in dentistry is not, as one might suppose, a service which has been recognized only recently. According to Dr. Alfred C. Fones, in his paper entitled, "The Origin and History of Dental Hygienists," which appeared in the March, 1929, number of the *Journal of American Dental Hygienists' Association*, the first article dealing with the subject of dental hygiene appeared as an editorial in 1844 in the *American Journal of Dental Science*, only five years after the establishment of this first dental journal in 1839. As Chapin Harris, Edward Maynard and Amos Westcott were the three editors of the journal at that time, the article, in all probability was written by one of them. It is pleasant to know that the subject of dental hygiene was considered an important thing in those early days of dentistry itself. In this editorial the author expressed regret that so much attention is given to therapeutics, mechanical dentistry, and surgery, while the "hygiene of the teeth is almost neglected." The editorial stated further that tracts and pamphlets "to promote dental hygiene" should be issued

by the American Society of Dental Surgeons.

The first formal paper on the subject of "Prophylaxis or the Prevention of Dental Decay" was prepared by Andrew McLain, of the New Orleans Dental College. This paper was published in 1870. In it the author stressed diet as a means toward the prevention of dental caries. However, it was not until 1879 that specific reference was made to the actual cleaning of teeth by the dentist. This point was brought out by G. A. Mills, of Brooklyn, N. Y., in his article entitled, "How to Keep the Teeth Clean and Healthy." Dr. Mills was the first to make mention of the explorer as a valuable instrument in dental hygiene.

It appears that Dr. D. D. Smith, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was one of the first to impress the importance of dental hygiene upon the dental profession. He accomplished this through papers based upon actual application of oral hygiene measures upon a selected group of patients over a period of years. He incorporated an account of the results of this work in a paper entitled, "Prophylaxis in Dentistry," which was read before the Washington City Dental Society in 1898. His work was of such interest and importance to the dental profession that he was much in demand as a speaker on the subject before numerous dental societies. He increased the extent of his prophylactic work from year to year. Although other leaders in the field have done an inestimable amount of good in disseminating the knowledge of dental prophylaxis among the people, Dr. Smith's work was particularly outstanding, and the title of "Father of Dental Prophylaxis" appropriately has been given him.



An interesting observation on the employment of women in dentistry comes from Dr. F. W. Low, of Buffalo, N. Y., in the year 1902. His working is rather picturesque. He says: "I read a little paper before the City Dental Society in Buffalo in which I advocated a new profession—that of 'odontocure'—a girl with an orange wood stick, some pumice, and possibly a flannel rag, who shall go from house to house." Dr. Low suggested the advisability of attacking the teeth with this armamentarium every two weeks, and boldly announced that the service would be worth fifty cents.

It would take more space than this paper calls for to mention all the individuals who have played a conspicuous part in the development of women's special work in dental health service. I should be negligent however, should I fail to mention Dr. M. L. Rhein of New York, who suggested the term "dental nurse," and who proposed the licensing of the practitioner of this type of work—which resulted ultimately in New York State being the first to attempt to legalize the "dental nurse"; and Dr. Alfred C. Fones, whose work is indeed outstanding. Dr. Fones was the first to employ a lay woman for the practice of dental prophylaxis, and it was he who suggested the term, "dental hygienist." He was responsible for the inauguration of dental prophylactic treatment in the Bridgeport, Conn., schools, the first service of that kind to be established.

The literature dealing with the origin and history of the dental assistant and her work is rather scant. This sparsity of historical records is probably attributable to the short time in which the dental assistant's work has been regarded as a unified service to a profession. We do know that the work of the dental assistant was first recognized in the western states as a vocational entity, and the dental assistants themselves as a body; the first dental assistants' society being

organized in Nebraska in 1917. Not until 1923 was a move made to organize the dental assistants into a society of national scope. This occurred in Cleveland, Ohio, when a small group of dental assistants held a conference to consider the advisability of such a movement, and a committee was formed to draft plans for a national organization and to outline its activities. This committee was to meet in Dallas, Texas, November, 1924, conjointly with the American Dental Association, then in session in that city. At a series of meetings held in Dallas, eleven states in the union were represented. It is interesting to know that the states represented were Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Texas but that only four of these, Alabama, Illinois, Indiana and New York, actually signed the organization charter roll—and formed the American Dental Assistants Association.

When we consider the fact that it took fifty years for medical nurses to achieve organization sufficient to impel their registration as trained medical nurses, the dental assistants need not be discouraged with the apparent slowness with which they as an organized body are being recognized. It is inevitable that eventually all dental assistants, or rather the large majority of them, will become members of the American Dental Assistants Association, just as the oral hygienists have achieved unity in a common body. As soon as the organization is able to do so, it should bring out a dental assistants' journal, having a national scope. Such a journal would help immeasurably in solidifying your working groups and raising the standards of your work. Its inspirational value should be great, for in addition to spreading useful information among its subscribers, such a periodical would mold the rather amorphous conception of the dental assistants work into an actuality of public service. It must be

remembered that for a great number of years dentistry, itself, was not recognized as a profession, even though the art had been practiced since antiquity. The earlier dentists learned the rudiments of their work as apprentices to older practitioners. If the dental profession had not seen the wisdom of organization, the public appreciation of their work would have advanced little beyond that accorded in the age of apprenticeship. Remember that the dental assistant of today is a pioneer in her field, and the opportunity to write her name indelibly in the history of her vocation is open to any young woman who is far-seeing and ambitious enough to seize it. The dental pioneers, Hayden and Harris are not famous today because they were good dentists in their time; they are remembered because they were pioneers with a vision that looked beyond their day. In establishing the first dental college they laid the foundation for the great superstructure which was to follow. They made themselves immortal in the annals of dentistry, and they justly deserve the esteem in which they are held by dentists of today. The medical profession likewise has its revered pioneers, as has all other professions. In the nursing profession Anna C. Maxwell is remembered not because she was a good nurse, but because she is regarded today as being chiefly responsible for the achievement of registration for medical nurses.

And now a word as to training for dental assistants. It is true that, with the increasing awareness of dental economics and the conservation of time as important considerations in the practice of dentistry, a need has developed for a more highly trained and efficient type of dental assistant. That day is past beyond recall when the duties of the dental assistant consisted simply of answering the telephone, receiving and dismissing patients, and knitting between times. The dental assistant of today must be more

than a mere formality in a dental office. She has various other duties to perform, and it behooves her, if she wishes to keep step with progress in the matter of remuneration and advancement, to equip herself for such duties. She must school herself for her work, whether she gets such training in a formal school or through the medium of practical experience and application. While I do not think formal schooling in an institution is absolutely necessary for the dental assistant, it is of course, desirable. But I wish to emphasize the fact that no young woman should become discouraged in her efforts to become an efficient dental assistant because she does not have the necessary tuition for institutional training. Any young woman with ambition, determination and keen observation should be able to make herself thoroughly proficient.

Dental assistants' training is usually included as a part of the curriculum for dental hygienists in dental schools having such a course, the dental assistant's phase of the work being listed as "dental assisting." Of course, there are other subjects common to the training of the dental hygienist and the dental assistant, such as "office training" and "laboratory practice." The courses now being offered in dental schools for dental hygienists and dental assistants vary considerably in the different institutions in the matter of hours devoted to the various subjects. One very prominent dental school offers a course of training, the objective which is to equip not only dental hygienists and dental assistants, but medical assistants as well. This school offers two courses; a junior course which covers one regular session of eight months and includes training in such subjects as dental anatomy, general chemistry, biology, bacteriology, radiology, nursing, special laboratory work, and office practice; a senior course, consisting of work in physiology, physiological chemistry, serology, bacteri-

ology, general and oral (dental) hygiene, dietetics, physical education, clinical experience and laboratory practice. The senior course is a continuation of the work of the junior course, the junior course consisting of 34 semester hours for all subjects, and the senior course of 32 semester hours for all subjects. The tuition for these approximates \$125.00 a year, the expense for books and instruments averaging about \$77.00 a year. There are other schools which have a junior and a senior course of approximately 32 weeks each, the junior course being for dental assistants, while the senior course is comprised of instruction for dental hygienists. The better schools for dental hygienists and dental assistants require for admission graduation from an accredited high school, usually specifying the following subjects: English—4 years; Science—2 years (including one year of one of the following subjects: advanced biology, physics, chemistry, or physical geography); Mathematics (one year of elementary algebra, one year of plane geometry); Foreign Language (two years of one language); History (one year); Civics (one-half year), and sufficient electives to make up a full four-year course, aggregating at least 15 units.

I shall not attempt in this paper to give a detailed outline of the dental assistant's training in a standard oral hygiene course, but shall stress certain essential things which a dental assistant should know and do, if she is to render her employer an efficient service. These things may be learned from experience as well as from institutional instruction, if the dental assistant has an alert mind and is anxious to achieve the full possibilities of her vocation. Perhaps the greatest value of a dental assistant lies in her ability to conserve the dentist's time. A dentist's time is his most valuable asset, and anything that will in any degree conserve that time is worthy of the greatest consideration. The time factor is pe-

culiarly important to the dentist because his income depends upon his personal ministrations. Therefore, in the training of the dental assistant stress should be placed upon the thought of saving time for the dentist. How time may be saved is well illustrated in a very common procedure in the dental office—the insertion of an amalgam filling. Let us see just what the capable dental assistant does during this operation. First of all, while the dentist is washing his hands, his efficient assistant has already seated his next patient in the chair, put a clean napkin on the bracket table and around the patient's neck, has placed upon the bracket table the necessary instruments for inserting the amalgam, cut off a piece of rubber dam, and is ready to assist the dentist further. This is all accomplished so quietly and so efficiently that it is difficult to realize just how much time she has already saved the operator.

A dental assistant must always do everything in the quickest possible manner, consistent with thoroughness. The time required in performing even the simplest operations can be reduced almost incredibly by eliminating lost motions. In other words, the amount of effective work a dental assistant accomplishes within a day depends not so much on what has been done as what has been omitted. We are all performers of lost motions. An unproductive step here and an unnecessary reaching there will amount to an amazing total waste of time in a day. Mechanical motions which are made with the least conscious effort are performed most efficiently; hence, it is apparent that a dental assistant must train herself in orderliness. If she is to reach an instrument quickly she must know its exact and unvarying location in the dentist's cabinet. If she is to mix amalgam or cement quickly, she must know the proportions of ingredients in each mix, the consistence of the mix required, and the time involved in either

process. Time is lost not so much in doing the big things as it is in doing the numerous little things throughout the day. Any one who has attempted to analyze the number of movements necessary in performing even the simplest tasks will be astounded at the result.

A dental assistant should understand at least the rudiments of bookkeeping, particularly if no regular bookkeeper is employed in the dentist's office. She should make all entries promptly on the books, and in a legible manner. Time saved the dentist in the business details of his office, such as the making out and mailing of statements, the collection of accounts, and the recording of payments, is just as important as time saved at the chair, for the dentist can spend more time in actual work if he is relieved of such matters.

Not the least important aspect of the dental assistant's qualifications lies in the tone she imparts to the general conduct of the office. Her personality is of tremendous significance. If she is likeable, efficient, agreeable, she will attract many patients to the dental office. She should never appear flippant and without a becoming amount of reserve. Patients know very little of the dentist's actual ability, aside from the fact that he may or may not do apparently satisfactory work. Their impression of the dentist's ability, therefore, is colored largely by the dentist's surrounding, the character and type of his office, the cleanliness of his operating rooms, and the appearance of his assistants. Patients believe that "like attracts like," and they cannot conceive of an efficient and conscientious dentist employing a frivolous, incompetent, or slovenly assistant. A dental assistant must not only be efficient, she must impress patients with her efficiency and poise. This she easily can do if she will give a little serious thought to the simple, elemental principles of psychology.

It is incomprehensible that a competent

dental assistant could have leisure for the reading of books or for sewing during office hours, yet it is no uncommon occurrence to see a dental assistant so wasting her time. Women in the business world should realize that their time is their employer's, and should expect no privileges—if such use of time could be classed a privilege—that men do not enjoy. There are thousands of things to be done in the conduct of a dental office, and if the dental assistant does not shoulder her share of the burden in the matter of expediting detail, the dentist must sustain a loss in his earning power equivalent to the extent of her deficiencies.

In her exhaustive essay entitled, *Methods I Have Found Valuable in the Conduct of a Dental Office*," reprinted in the February 1922 issue of the *Dental Digest*, Mrs. Juliette A. Southard, Founder and Past President of the American Dental Assistants Association, mentions a long list of duties the dental assistant should perform, for some of which I am indebted in the following resume:

**Laundry:** She must see that clean operating coats, gowns, and towels are available at all times.

**Sterilizers:** The sterilizer should be ready at all times. A pinch of soda in the sterilizer will prevent the rust of instruments.

**The Laboratory:** A good dental assistant will see that dental work is ready for each patient at the time appointed. She should make a superficial inspection of work just as soon as it is received from the laboratory, and note any glaring defects, to which she may call the attention of the dentist. She should see that work is returned from the laboratory an hour or so before the arrival of the patient. If this is done, the patient may be saved a useless trip to the office in the event the laboratory work is not satisfactory. She should keep all pieces tagged, with dates.

*The Office Mail:* She should make an inspection of the office mail before it reaches the dentist, separating the more important from the less important. Advertising matter of interest to the dentist should be kept in a file.

*The Making of Appointments:* The dental assistant should attempt to arrange appointments, so far as possible, to conform to the preference and convenience of the patient. It is well to give the same day of each week as an appointment for patients coming systematically and regularly to the dentist's office. Difficult cases and nervous intractable patients should be given early morning appointments, when both the dentist and patient are at their best.

*The Assessing of Fees:* The proficient dental assistant should learn the approximate scale of the dentist's fees, and present her estimated charges, at the end of each day, for his revision.

*The Keeping of Records:* She should record the actual time the patient spends in the chair, the type of work done by the dentist at the sitting, and the type and extent of work to be done at the next sitting. She should copy such data on a working chart, and have it available at all times for the dentist's inspection. Such a chart, in addition to containing diagrams of the upper and lower teeth, should be so ruled and arranged that space may be provided for such miscellaneous data as the name and the address of the patient, the telephone number, references, payments made, mould and color of artificial teeth, facings, etc. It is well to keep a separate history chart, upon which may be kept such interesting and useful data as the occupation of the patient, his financial condition, former record with other dentists or physicians, etc.

*The Keeping of Supplies:* A convenient place, such as a closet, should be provided for the keeping of supplies. An inventory of all supplies should be placed on the closet door, or in some conspicuous place, for ready reference. Supplies

should be bought in large quantities, as much more money may be saved that way. The dental assistant should know at all times just how much of each material she has on hand, and before the supply is exhausted she should place an order for more. Each batch of material should be placed in such a manner that it readily may be seen, and all bottles should be properly and plainly labeled.

*The Care of the Office:* See that the office is neat and attractive at all times. Have a place for everything. Keep magazines and miscellaneous papers off the tops of cabinets. Remove magazines from the reception room before they become valuable antiques. Keep the reception room and the office well ventilated. Dental offices are particularly liable to smell musty and reek with the odors of chemicals. They should be thoroughly aired the first thing each morning. The proper placing of well selected flowers will impart a cheery tone to the waiting room.

A proficient dental assistant will try to learn as much about actual dental practice and technique as she can absorb. While it is not within her province to do the work of the dentist, a general knowledge of his work will increase her value to him and enable her to render more efficient service. While it is generally understood that she should be able to do such routine operations as the mixing of amalgams, cements and other plastic fillings, she need not necessarily confine her activities to such operations. She may learn such simple laboratory duties as the mixing of plaster, the selection of tooth shades, the preparation of impression compounds and the developing and mounting of X-rays. The greater her knowledge of dental procedure, the greater will be her value to the dentist.

She may be as valuable as she chooses to be, and her field of usefulness will extend as far as her vision and ambition carry her.

*Read before the Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Dental Assistants Association, Memphis, Tennessee, 1931.*



## A Brief Exposition on Dentistry

By RALPH M. ROGERS, D.D.S.

*Given Before the Pasadena Dental Assistants Association, April 14th, 1932*

**D**ENTISTRY—or Dental Surgery is the science of the prevention and treatment of diseases and malformities of the teeth, mouth and jaws; and as such is one of the noblest of all the arts because it not only treats the most prevalent disease to which mankind is heir, but at the same time is productive and extremely humanitarian.

The history of dentistry, of course, dates back to the beginning of the healing art and was practiced with more or less success by the various types of doctors of the old world until about 1840 in the new world it began to become a specialized branch of the medical art. Many of you know it was a dentist by the name of Wells who first discovered general anesthesia and gave it to the world about 1848. That alone has been such a boon in the alleviation of suffering that its value can never even be estimated.

Today the specialty of Dentistry has become so broad that it has given rise to a dozen or more specialties of its own, including periodontia, pedodontia, prosthodontia, orthodontia, exodontia, radiodontia and diagnosis, operative dentistry, oral surgery, ceramics, root canal therapy, dental hygiene, dietetics and others—all of which have an almost inestimable value to the welfare of mankind.

Preventive Dentistry is generally thought of in connection with the prevention of dental decay, but is by no means so limited since every one of the specialties just named must play its part in the prevention of human physical and mental ills.

Unfortunately for society, the need for dentistry is always here and its services are counted among the necessities of

life and the ethical, skilled and sincere practitioner places them far above any mercenary value. However, the system of living in almost every part of the world makes the problem of economics a necessary part of its practice today.

Let us observe some of the ills which take place when proper dentistry is absent or is not practiced. The records of the Mayo clinic in Rochester, Minn., for instance, show that 87 per cent of the patients that present at the institute for treatment are there because of bacterial infection in some form and of these, 62 per cent of them gained the infection through the mouth and teeth. The records also show—and I have this from both Dr. Charles Mayo himself and Dr. Boyd Gardner, head of the Dental Department at that clinic—that 33 per cent of the edentulous patients—that is those who have supposedly lost all their teeth and are wearing dentures or not—still have broken off or decayed roots or teeth (impacted or not)—left in their jaws. The effects of this infection is manifested in the organs and body tissues through a great long list of diseases such as myocarditis and endocarditis affecting the heart, Bright's and Addison's disease affecting the kidney, jaundice of the liver, arthritis and rheumatism affecting the joints and muscles, iritis and ulcers of the eye and so forth and so on. The specialties of periodontia—that is prophylaxis and pyorrhea work, exodontia—which is extracting and oral surgery; prosthodontia, the making of artificial dentures, and operative dentistry which treats the cavities and their results, would have a great effect in eradicating the above type of maladies which are due to infection.

Now let us observe some of the other factors which dentistry accomplishes. Think of the malformed appearance which many children would have to carry through life, together with the sequellae which arise, were it not for the services of the orthodontist in regulating their teeth. We are all taxpayers, directly or indirectly and are therefore greatly concerned whether our school children are able to make their grades or fail to pass on account of some physical ailment and we pay the taxes while they are taking the same grade over. As taxpayers we must be interested whether they are our own children or not. The services of the pedodontist (or children's dentist) and dental hygienist as well as the dietician are very important here. The problem of diet is becoming more and more important every day. This relates to every

one of us and especially to the children and expectant mother.

Insurance and other statistics tell us that dentistry has played a great part in raising the expectancy of life in the last 25 years from below 40 years to the present average of 58. They tell us that we may expect to live to be 70 in another 25 years, but in order to do so we must watch our health between the ages of 30 to 50 years in particular.

In conclusion we may state that the services of the dental specialist or the modern type of general practitioner who is able to correlate very well the many factors in dental surgery, are absolutely necessary to over 99 per cent of the people of this country, as well as most foreign countries, and let us see to it that society takes advantage of those factors which make for a longer life of health and happiness.

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## A Word to the Dental Assistant

By OTTILIE EISELE, New York City

Member of the E. & E. Society for D. A. 1st District N. Y., Inc.

**H**AVE you ever tried to visualize the important part you are playing in the conduct of an ethical dental office, in your service to humanity and to the dental profession as a whole? Have you tried to summarize and analyze the thousand and one details that combine to make you an efficient dental assistant? Have you ever compared your responsibilities with those in other lines of endeavor? If not, I would advise you to do so, in order that you may convince yourself and your colleagues, and fully realize what an important part it is that you are playing in the great health program that dentistry is endeavoring to sponsor.

No doubt you will agree with me when I say that the fundamental and dominant thought of any young woman

entering the field of dental assisting, which we hope will soon be recognized as a profession, must be, to be of service to humanity. With that thought predominating, she will acquire the strength, the conscientious alertness, and the integrity she needs to make her calling a noble one; "her mission" would perhaps be a more correct expression. Let me visualize some of the phases of work a dental assistant has to perform daily. In the morning she enters her office *on time*, sees that the place is ventilated, clean and inviting. May I mention here that it requires a great effort on the part of the assistant whose office is in a large office building, practically dependent on herself for the keeping in order, as the women employed by the managers of such buildings usually

have from ten to fourteen offices to straighten up each night, so that they cannot give more than ten to fifteen minutes to each office. Therefore, all you can expect them to do is to take care of the floors and the waste receptacles. The assistant must care for the equipment and cabinets; sterilize the instruments and keep them in order; care for the linen, the uniforms, oil the dental engine, sterilize and lubricate the hand pieces, contra angles, etc. . . . "Oh, dear, how does the dental chair look when it has not been polished for a day or two—and the nickel?"

The assistant must have the operating room in order for each patient, it means great hustling at times, but each patient is entitled to the same respect, courtesy, attention and cleanliness. It is essential that the assistant be of a pleasing personality and be able to approach the patient with an air of assurance, or a manner that will inspire confidence and respect. The laity does not feel as we do, they are uncomfortable and afraid of the dental chair, and oftentimes of the dentist. In my estimation any dental assistant who has the personality and manner of approaching the patient in such a way as to make them forget or overcome their self-consciousness and fear, is a great asset to the dentist and an aid to the patient.

When you have your patient comfortably seated in the chair, it will please them to know that you remember their favorite mouth wash, and whether they prefer it warm or cold. It seems just a trivial thought, yet it means a great deal to the observing, appreciative patient. Be sure to always have the proper instruments, medicaments and other necessary things with the patient's chart ready for the doctor. Look over your supplies and make sure nothing is missing that the doctor may need. Never allow yourself to run out of swabs, cotton rolls, rubber dam, temporary stopping, cotton points, and the many other very necessary sup-

plies used every day. X-ray technique is another important factor and requires a study in itself. You are all familiar with the procedure, yet the most skilled are apt to be disappointed with the results at times and constant application is required for the best results. Hello! there's the telephone. Give Mrs. Jones an appointment with a voice that smiles, or pacify the irate patient who has lost a filling, or dismiss the agent who has something to sell.

Do not forget that as a general assistant you are a secretary as well as a nurse; Remember to mail the reminders when due, and at the end of the month have the statements ready to be posted. When I think of that delicate but important problem, the collection of delinquent accounts, especially in these so-called times of depression, I know you have a real problem, and how to handle this matter is not easily described, as each case has to be treated individually. Checks must be deposited as soon as received, the correspondence cared for promptly, charts and records should be kept posted up to the minute. In the laboratory are the dies to be packed, the inlays to be cast, the impressions pieced and models poured, crowns and bridges to be polished, etc., etc., etc.

Dear, me, there goes the door bell again! Why must the telephone ring at the same time. Patience, perseverance, tact, determination, and the day's work is done. My best wishes to every dental assistant, may she be fortunate in giving her sincere efforts, qualifications and willingness to a dentist who will appreciate her and realize that she is an asset to him as well as to the laity, and the dental profession at large.

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"Success is not gained by lying awake at night, but by keeping awake in the daytime.

Silence is the most satisfactory substitute for wisdom."

## Dental Nurse Psychology and Personality

By MARY RAPE, Atlanta, Ga.

Member of the Fifth District, D. N. & A. Assn., Ga.

**T**O properly discuss a subject of such magnitude within the limits of this paper in any technical manner is quite impossible. I shall only try to tell you in a simple way some facts about practical psychology and personality that should prove useful to a dental nurse.

Everyone is familiar with the great increase in the popularity of psychology within recent years. The number of books on psychological topics, the number of so-called psychological plays, of references to psychology in the newspapers and magazines, of efficiency bureaus and similar enterprises in the business world, all indicate a remarkable change in the status of psychology. One might say that it is due to the fondness of the American people for fads, and that in a few years nothing will be heard of all these applications of psychology to practical life. But psychology is a study of the ways of man—of how he sees and hears, of how he feels and thinks, and of how he moves. In other words, it is concerned with human nature. At one time psychology had to do almost exclusively with the conscious experiences. But in late years it has been increasingly realized that what people do is quite as important as what they feel and what they think. Thus, human nature as it is looked upon by modern psychology embraces both mental life and behavior; and behavior is a characteristic of people, which has always been present and which always will be present.

Most people, when they begin the study of scientific psychology, are surprised at the number of facts and principles of mental life and behavior, which they have previously picked up without any effort to do so. We see every day how practice increases skill. We know how people

develop from helpless infants into adults competent to make their own way in the world. Such matters pertain to human nature, and the fact that people generally are aware of them means that most individuals know some psychology, whether or not they have ever realized it. But all those engaged in dental nursing do not realize how great is the need in their profession. Behavior is the individual's way of dealing with situations arising from impressions made upon one by objects, people and events; and results in some sort of adjustment to those conditions. The adjustment made by the dental nurse may be mechanical and rigid, insensible to misfits, without power to readjust as conditions alter, or, it may be flexible and adaptive, but it always represents her capacity for achievement. It indicates her efficiency and signifies her tactics of life. A true dental nurse, like a true artist, must have a fine sense of perspective. Everything which elevates and ennobles character should form an integral part of her nature. Every vocation or calling has some advantage over every other. A dental nurse for example should develop much finer mental and spiritual qualities than if she were in an ordinary commercial office. She may not have as many dollars, but she will undoubtedly acquire more culture. In what we call the finer vocations there are many compensations for the probable loss of material wealth. If she does not have an absorbing interest in her calling, if it does not appeal to her naturally and easily without urging, she does not belong there. Unless her ideal continually reaches out before her and beckons her to higher things, she may be sure there is something wrong, either with herself or with the selection of her vocation. There

is no one thing which will so touch the life to a finer purpose as the habit of yearning for improvement. All her powers must be concentrated and wisely directed toward the accomplishment of the task undertaken. With heart, hand, brain and patience that is akin to genius, she must persevere, for as she advances, her ideal as steadily moves upward.

The ability to "get along with people" is a valuable asset in any profession, but is absolutely essential to the dental nurse, as she comes in contact with all classes of people, high and low, rich and poor. Even if she cannot support the main beliefs and interests of others, she can, at least, make a valiant effort to understand why the ideas of others are not the same as her own. She should learn to see herself from the other fellow's point of view. To the extent that she is able to predict and to modify, to comprehend, and, in some measure, to control her own and her patient's reactions, to that extent may she be said to possess the knowledge which is power. In other words, it means that she is the fortunate possessor of tact—that most desired characteristic of personality. Tact is a great success producer; it smooths away and eases the jolts of life wonderfully. Into the best regulated offices come moments of unrest and a comedy of errors, which have a tendency to upset a whole day, but if the nurse is alert and has prepared herself, she will be able to absorb the situation gracefully, and with dignity accept the responsibility of smoothing out conditions, which can be done in such a way as to add more confidence and respect in the patient present, thereby using the occasion to an advantage.

It is a simple matter to enumerate qualities of success, but one can never be reminded of them too often, and I am sure each one desires the ability to grasp and comprehend the significance of any qualification conducive to the promotion of her beloved profession. And as these are partly matter of habit, it is important

to have them in mind as objectives. Some of the fundamental requisites and essentials of success for a dental nurse are: Honesty, loyalty, patience, steadiness of temper, initiative, integrity, order and system, attention, poise and courage. The management of patients involves kindness, gentleness, courtesy, and consideration for their comfort. She should be able to analyze and study the causes of their idiosyncrasies, and enthusiastically look for an opportunity to make harmonious and effective impressions—"First impressions are usually lasting." The little acts of kindness, the little courtesies, the disposition to be accommodating, to be helpful, to be sympathetic, to be unselfish, to be careful not to wound the feelings of others, are the little things, which added together, make a happy day. "Like begets like"—be kind to others and they will feel inclined spontaneously to be kind to you; smile at others and they will surely smile back. If the dental nurse is in love with her work, she will do her best at all times, and will achieve results that could never be obtained if she performed her duties perfunctorily. "Life is Divine when duty is a joy."

Modesty and self-confidence incorporated produce a quality indispensable to anyone, which can be termed poise. Be sure you are right, then go ahead. It is true, that, to us all, comes, at times, the great note of questioning despair, and we wonder why there is so much unnecessary pain, sorrowing and suffering in the world, but we must remember that life is a wondrously complex problem for the individual, until, some day, in a moment of illumination, he awakens to the great realization that he can make it simple—never quite simple, but always simpler! George Matthew Adams, delightful writer, philosopher and lover of the beautiful, in one of his charming daily talks, observes: "For nearly twenty years I have played golf. Here is something I have noted about myself as well as others. Often a hole is played rather



poorly, after several good holes, and the immediate thought is: 'I wish I could play that hole over.' But, alas! You always have to wait another round or another day, for that. How many strokes in life we wish we could play over. But here again we must go on with the game hoping for better skill and control the next time. Nothing troubles more than regrets—We must learn that the past is something that is gone—forever. Life must always be ahead. And so we must try to play the next hole better. Perhaps it will be our best hole! Some of us will never be golf champions. But the simplest and humblest of us may become champion friends! I would like to perfect my game to that end. Wouldn't you?" The only responsibility that the dental nurse can not evade in this life is the one she probably thinks of least—her personal influence; her unconscious influence, the silent, subtle radiation of her personality, the effect of her words and acts, the trifles she never considers, make a tremendous impression. Everyone has

an atmosphere which is affecting some other. So silent and unconsciously is this influence working at times that we may forget that it exists.

There is nothing quite so attractive as a personality overflowing with happiness, radiating good cheer. Therefore, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of forming a habit of cheerfulness early in life. The optimist is one whose mind has dwelt so long upon the sunny side of life that he has acquired a habit of cheerfulness and lasting happiness; and happiness is the greatest paradox in nature. It can grow in any soil, live under any conditions. It defies environment; it comes from within; it is the revelation of the depths of the inner life as light and heat proclaim the sun from which they radiate. Happiness consists not of having, but of being; not of possessing, but of enjoying. For what a man has, he may be dependent on others; what he is, rests with him alone. What he obtains in life is but acquisition; what he attains is growth.

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## Book Review

### "A MANUAL FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS"

Edited by ALBERT EDWARD WEBSTER, D.D.S., M.D.S., M.D., F.A.C.D.

**D**R. WEBSTER is Honorary Dean and Professor of Operative Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto; Honorary Member of the British Dental Association; Past-President of Canadian Dental Association, American Institute of Dental Teachers, and President of the International Association for Dental Research; Editor of the Dominion Dental Journal. The contributors to this Manual besides Dr. Webster are John Alexander Bothwell, D.D.S., Frederick F. Molt, D.D.S., Robert D. Thornton, D.D.S., and the Misses Pearl B. Bartindale and Gertrude F. Whithead, Dental Nurses.

The Manual is dedicated to Dr. Charles Nelson Johnson, Teacher-Author-Philanthropist. Its contents are very comprehensive and detailed and cover the various phases of assistance that make for efficient conduct of a dental practice and satisfactory dental operations. It also gives the assistant an appreciation of system and co-operation, ethics and economics. It teaches her the simple fundamentals of Anatomy, Dental Anatomy, Bacteriology, Pathology, and First Aid. Instruments and all types of materials are listed and illustrated, dental equipment is explained and its care, Laboratory Technique is given several chapters, also the role of the assistant in Anesthesia and Radiography.—Published by Lea & Febiger, 600 S. Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pa. Price \$3.50.

# The Dental Assistant

A Monthly Publication

A Journal for Dental Assistants Devoted to Their Interests and Education

All communications for publication must be in the hands of the Editor on or before the tenth of the month previous to publication. Publication of statements, opinions, or other data is not to be understood as an endorsement of same by the magazine or its publishers.

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NEW YORK CITY, NOVEMBER, 1932

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## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

### ART

By HELENE HIGGINS, Chicago, Ill.

*Member of the Chicago Dental Assistants Assn.*

FOUR-year-old Mary Lenore was helping me in the laboratory the other day while her mother had her teeth cleaned. To amuse her, I had mixed some tiny portions of different colored investments, and told her that when she was leaving she might take home the one she liked best. To my dismay she pointed a chubby finger at the green investment covering an inlay at the other end of the bench, and insisted upon taking that one. I gently refused; she argued; I refused in a more subtle way; she shook her curly head, stamped her small foot, and screamed, "That one, I said. The booful one. I want the booful one!"

Child psychologists have said that youngsters are almost always idealists, and can be led to anything if their imagination is challenged. I think few girls outgrow that faculty, although our "Modern Age" prevents most of them from recognizing such a tendency. Most girls, little or big, want the "booful" things, and long to make lovely things. Twenty-four-year-old Mary Lenore would probably stand by her laboratory bench, and shaking her head, stamp her foot and whisper, "Dog-gone, what's the use? This work is so dull and homely. I wish I could do all porcelain work or something lovely. It's no fun just doing the ordinary work, like being pleasant to the patients, and keeping the office fresh and neat, and remembering all the tiresome details for the Doctor, and being a second pair of hands for him. There's nothing artistic about anything I do. I wish I were somebody wonderful doing wonderful things."

There must be hundreds of Mary Lenores in the world of dental assistants today . . . girls who think they are doing nothing of importance because they are merely doing what they are supposed to do, and doing it as well as they are capable of doing it. And those are the girls who, while longing to do something "wonderful," are giving the best that is in them, wanting to give more; quite unaware that in giving their best they are doing the "all-wonderful" for their Doctors, their patients, and themselves. They are poor, silly little Mary Lenores who want the beautiful, and can't see that they have it, who can't realize that as William Mathews said: "A great deal of the joy of life consists in doing perfectly, or at least to the

best of one's ability, everything which he attempts to do. There is a sense of satisfaction, a pride in surveying such a work—a work which is rounded, full, exact, complete in all its parts—which the superficial man, who leaves his work in a slovenly, slipshod, half-finished condition, can never know. It is this conscientious completeness which turns work into art. The smallest thing, well done, becomes artistic." So, dental assistants, you can be an "artist"—you are an "artist," if you do your work well.

## Is It Worth While?

SOMETIMES in the stress and strain of things it is natural for us to ask the question. Everything seems to break wrong—the milk sours, the jelly won't jell, the dough won't rise, the cement doesn't set, the cows break out of the pasture, the radiator leaks, the cat gets the canary, the spark plugs won't spark, the hammer hits the thumb, the muffler back-fires, it rains on the clean clothes, the wire nail goes through the new tire, the stove won't draw, the inlay won't cast, the gun doesn't go off (thank heaven), the rubber dam tears, someone puts fishworms in the gas tank, the compositor—well the things the compositor can't do to you aren't worth mentioning, but mostly the compositor can, and does, save your life,—your back itches when you can't scratch it, the telephone girl goes to sleep at the switch—bless her heart—and Mary Ann, the cook, elopes with the milkman (which may not be so bad after all).

Anyhow that's the way things are, and we wonder. Then if we are wise we sit down and take a hitch in our resolutions and think the matter through. And when we do that we soon realize how very small after all are most of the annoyances that irk us. The things we fuss and stew about are really infinitesimal when compared with the great issues of life, and these are the only issues worth considering. The most significant thing about many of the small incidents that we permit to disturb us is their ephemeral nature. Few of them ever last long enough to be of any consequence, and the thing that today seems so exasperating and hopeless will likely by tomorrow dwindle into insignificance. If we smash our thumb it soon gets well and in a brief span it is forgotten. Why storm and stew about it? If it hurts too much at the moment we have the recourse of a silent little cuss word to relieve the tension—sometimes not so silent either—and we had better do even as foolish a thing as cuss than to nurse our grief and become grouchy over it.

Always and forever there is the rainbow or the sunshine behind the clouds of our small mishaps. Nothing in the petty misadventures of life is ever fundamental or is ever permanent. Let us turn our faces resolutely toward the light and keep the clouds at our backs. We were destined for bigger things and it is our own fault if we permit the non-essentials to absorb our interest or dominate our daily lives. Better far to face the big issues and ignore the minutiae. The affairs of the world move to-day in bigger spheres than ever before, and there is little time to waste on the pettiness of minor annoyances. The sweep and urge of our destinies offer a fairer field for our strivings, and if we think in larger cycles instead of small we shall soon discover that life is a very alluring adventure, and that every experience that comes to us may be made but a stepping stone to finer and better thing.

Yes, after all it is well worth while.

C. N. JOHNSON.

This editorial taken from the September 1932 issue of "Oral Health" published at Toronto, Canada, is from the pen of the beloved member of the dental profession, Dr. Charles Nelson Johnson, Honorary Member of the American Dental Assistants Association.



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## Question Box

ELIZABETH V. SHOEMAKER  
Kew Plaza, Kew Gardens, N. Y.



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- Q. What is the proper term to apply to an undershot jaw?
- A. Prognathism.
- Q. How can the sequence of sterilization be unbroken in the use of Carpules?
- A. First sterile hands and towels. Second a sterile syringe. Third, if the carpule has a rubber diaphragm wipe entire rubber surface with iodine and allow to dry before puncturing with needle. If the carpule has a metal cap this is lightly flamed, care being taken not to crack the carpule. Do this just before puncturing with the needle.
- Q. What duty would you consider the most important for a general dental assistant to carry out?
- A. The prompt and careful sterilizing of instruments just used, and having them in their proper place so that the dentist does not have to look or wait for them when working on the next patient.
- Q. Is it necessary to consider the temperature of a slab used for mixing porcelain?
- A. It is very necessary to consider the temperature of the slab between 65 and 75 degrees. This is accomplished in warm weather by running cold water over the slab or placing in a refrigerator a few moments. In either case be sure all moisture is wiped off the slab before placing powder or liquid thereon for mixing. Wipe both sides of slab with alcohol to assure dryness.
- Q. How can I keep modelling compound from sticking to the sides of the container in which it is being softened?
- A. There is a holder on the market with removable gauze for this purpose. The compound is placed on the gauze and the holder immersed in the hot water. If this is not at hand place the compound in a square of gauze, fasten the four corners together with a rubber band or hold with a pair of pliers.
- Do You Know That—The clinic presented at the American Dental Association meeting held in Buffalo in September by two members of the E. & E. Society, as the contribution of the Dental Assistants Association, State of New York, for the clinics of the American Dental Assistants Association, was awarded the First Honorable Mention Blue Ribbon. The clinic was entitled "The Dental Assistant's Role in Newer Methods of Radiography."
- Do You Know That—If gold paint is used to outline rests, lugs, clasps, lingual and palatal bars on study models, it is easier to explain the work to patients.

We invite our readers to send in questions and suggestions. Personal replies will be sent upon receipt of self addressed and stamped envelope. Data must be received the 8th of the month for the issue of the succeeding month.

## Educational and Efficiency Society

FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

1st District, N. Y., Inc.

### MEETING

Tuesday, November 8th, 1932, 7:45 P. M., Hotel Pennsylvania, 33rd Street and 7th Avenue, New York City.

### PROGRAM

#### Speaker

Miss Claire Sugden, Authority on Domestic Economy.

#### Topic

"The Romantic and Practical Side of Cookery."

### CLINIC CLUB

Monday, November 21st, 1932, 7:30 P. M. Office of Dr. Henry Fowler, 174 West 96th Street, New York City. A practical demonstration of office procedure will be given.

### CLASSES

There still are vacancies in some of the classes. Please sign up with Ethel M. Pollack, Director, 1825 Harrison Avenue, New York City.

The first class of the season, "Laboratory Procedure for the Dental Assistant," is in session under the able direction of Dr. Solomon J. Mink, 340 West 57th Street, New York City.

### PROPOSED FOR MEMBERSHIP

Miss Evelyn J. Sauter, with Dr. Benning, 164-05 89th Street, Jamaica, L. I.

### LIBRARY

Patronize your library. Get in touch with Sylvia Messinger, 516 5th Avenue, New York City. See her at the meetings, she has a list of all the books and a catalogue of all the articles for your selection.

Every dental assistant should have a medical dictionary for reference, especially those who are taking special courses of study. It is suggested that one of these would make a good Christmas gift.

### GREATER NEW YORK BETTER DENTISTRY MEETING

Members of the E. & E. Society will present a clinic at the Greater New York Better Dentistry Meeting, Hotel Pennsylvania, December 8th, 8 P. M. The clinic shown will be the one awarded the first Honorable Mention Blue Ribbon at the meeting of the A. D. A. Assn., Buffalo, N. Y., in September.

#### Subject

"Practical Assistance in New Methods of Radiography."

All members are urged to attend. Secure admission cards at the November meeting from the President, Rosemarie Cornelis.

### OFFICERS

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## Here and There

Robina A. McMurdo, 140 East 80th St., N. Y. C.

### The D. A. Study Club, Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Study Class will meet Friday, November 4, 1932, at 8 P. M. The Clinician will be Miss H. Olandt, R. N., B. S., Superintendent of Nurses, Cumberland Hospital, Brooklyn, N. Y., who will lecture on "First Aid."

The regular meeting will be held Friday, November 18, 1932, at 8 P. M. The Essayist will be Dr. Lawrence J. Dunn, his topic "Dental Records—Dental Book-keeping."

All meetings are held at the Second District Dental Society Clinic Rooms, 62 Hanson Place, Brooklyn, N. Y., and a cordial invitation is extended to members of the dental profession and all who may be interested to attend these meetings.

MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN,  
*Corresponding Secretary.*

### Bergen Co. D. A. Assn., New Jersey

In November the regular meeting will be held on Friday, November 4th, instead of Friday, November 11th.  
PLEASE NOTE.

The Clinic Committee will present a clinic on "Copper Amalgams." Meeting will be held at the Y.M.C.A., 360 Main Street, Hackensack, N. J.

MARGERY L. DANNHAUSER,  
*Publicity Chairman.*

### D. A. Assn., Northern New Jersey

The regular meeting will be held November 15th, 8 P. M., at the Medical Tower Building, Newark, N. J. A cordial invitation is extended to members of the dental profession and dental assistants to attend all meetings.

MILDRED VAN BUSKIRK, Pub. Ch'm.  
519 Prospect St., Maplewood, N. J.

### American Dental Assistants Assn.

*Echoes of the Eighth Annual Meeting held at Buffalo, N. Y., September 12-15, 1932.*

The silver "Loyalty Cup" was awarded to Mrs. Elizabeth Miller, of Fort Wayne, Ind., for 27 years and 7 months continuous service in the office of Drs. Ivins and Williams. And some folks say that dental assistants do not remain very long in any position.

The silver trophy for the society having enrolled the greatest number of new members during the year was awarded to the San Francisco District, D. A. Assn., California. The Valley District D. A. Assn., Mass., and the Pasadena D. A. Assn., Cal., were awarded the second and third prize respectively.

The silver trophy for the best poster in the Health Exhibit of the American Dental Assn., was awarded to the Philadelphia, Pa., Association of Dental Nurses. First and second Honorable Mention Blue Ribbons were presented to the Southern Kansas D. A. Assn., and the Georgia State D. A., Assn., respectively.

The silver trophy for the best clinic presented in connection with the clinics of the American Dental Association, by the A. D. A. Assn., was captured by the Georgia State D. A. Assn., with "Linen Hints."—The N. Y. State D. A. Assn. took first Honorable Mention with "The Dental Assistant's Role in Newer Methods of Radiography." The Nebraska D. A. Assn. was given second Honorable Mention for their "Assisting with the Child Patient."

A new silver trophy for the society having had the best attendance at the meeting will be announced shortly.

This department is devoted to ALL societies affiliated with the American Dental Assistants Association, who are URGED to send in news items each month. We also will be pleased to publish items of interest from the dental societies and from the societies for dental hygienists. Data must be received by the 8th of each month for the activities of the succeeding month.

## Germ

"Say, Spiro Old Onion, did you really. . . ." "Hey, there, Mike, Old Pal, what do you mean OLD ONION? Is that a sweet name for a good old friend?" "Well, Spiro, I'll admit that it may not be SWEET but its the STRONGEST endearing term I can think of. No hard feelings, I hope, and since a certain ex-governor can call a certain presidential candidate "OLD POTATO," who can complain? Certainly not we vegetables, eh, wot? But as I started to say, did you really go to Chicago following that D. A. meeting at Buffalo? . . . What am I talking about? Oh, was it a secret? I shouldn't get funny. Well the other day, there being no customers, I was taking a nap comfortably tucked under the lapel of the uniform of a certain well-known D. A. (I work in her office just now) when she got a letter from another prominent D. A. named Zella, who comes from California, and she laughed so loud it woke me up. Then she said to the Doc we work for—"I always knew Spiro was an active somebody, but listen to this Doctor. Spiro Keet traveled with me to Cleveland by boat and with Irene and me to Chicago by train, and then we all went to the La Salle Hotel where we met Ruth Rogers, and Ruth Clark, and Mildred Graham, and Mildred Stevenson, and Aloise Clement, and had an interesting post-convention reunion." "Now I know why it took you so long to get back home. That story about getting lost on the train was a good story all right, but what I want to know is what you really did in Chicago?" "Well, if you must know, it was like this. I have always wanted to trace the origin of *oral prophylaxis* and I went after certain documentation to substantiate certain rumors that it was a certain 'Dental Bird' . . . No, I don't mean 'Dentist,' I mean just what I say . . . it was a certain 'Dental Bird' who first practiced *Dental Hygiene*. I am quoting.—The crocodile when it feels the need of *oral prophylaxis*, climbs out on the bank of the river in which it makes its home, opens its huge mouth invitingly and waits. In due time a bird known as the Nile-bird comes along, sees the job waiting and goes to work. It hops into the crocodile's mouth and picks off all the leeches and other foreign forms of life which may be clinging to the tongue and cavity walls, and then departs. The crocodile closes his mouth and with not so much as a thank you slides back into the water to accumulate another job for another Nile-bird.—It was Pope who said, 'It is with the narrow souled people as with narrow necked bottles, the less they have in them the more noise they make pouring it out.' So long, dear confrere! How is that for a parting salutation?"

Yours for a happy Thanksgiving—and don't pick your teeth with a pin.

OT  
SPIRO KEETS. A

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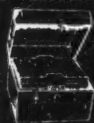
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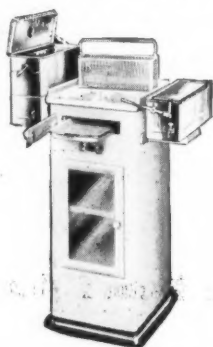


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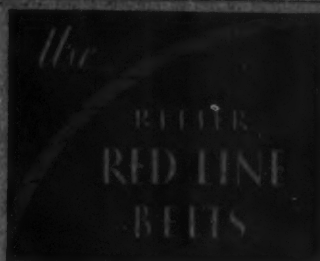
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